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ABSTRACT

In order to create the ethos of a social "movement," a collective must show that it is moving (1) against something (an enemy); (2) towards something (a vision of possibility); (3) from something (situation of origin); and (4) with something (an ever-expanding collection of people). When applied to protestant Christian feminism (as represented by V. Mollenkott, D. Carmody, R. Ruether, and others), this model shows the movement's structure, its progress and it's future crisis points caused by an imbalance in one of the four processes. In the movement against, protestant Christian feminism's confrontational rhetoric targets the exclusively male language of the traditional church, and seeks to "castrate" sexist religious discourse by revising liturgical wording and redescribing religious experience in female metaphors. In the movement towards, Christian feminism's visionary rhetoric projects, with limited success, an androgynous reconstruction of socio-economic relationships in a communal society based on ecological and feminine principles. In the movement from, Christian feminist consciousness raising rhetoric creates the shared experience of past enslavement, common pain, and direct or indirect complicity and integrates it in cathartic worship. In the movement with, Christian feminism's mobilizational rhetoric uses various strategies, sometimes bordering on separatism, to increase membership, train leaders and publicize its presence. The visionary dimension of the ethos is the weakest, appearing grandiose and paralyzing, and must be improved for the group to maintain the ethos of movement. (JG)

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"When God is Manly, All Men Are God-like": A Rhetorical Analysis of the Protestant Christian Feminist Movement

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Social Movements are an active part of twentieth century life. Mary Ellen Leary, a journalist, argues that movements have taken over much of the role of political parties in America.[1] Inspite of this we have not developed an adequate way to understand the rhetorical dynamics involved in the formation and management of a movement. A survey of thirty years of research in social movment rhetoric reveals a great deal of time devoted to defining what a movement is, little effort spent on developing a synthesis of various perspectives, and almost no time spent using theory to guide the investigation of social movements. The end result is a competition among four seemingly disperate perspectives (presented in Central States Speech Journal, Winter, 1980) and the discovery by Sillars and Riches that a majority of articles on social movement rhetoric make little reference to "established movement theory."[2]

CRITIQUE OF EXISTING PARADIGMS

The Confrontational Perspective: The central idea in this perspective, according to Cathcart, is that a movement begins when there is "a ritual enactment that dramatizes complete alienation."[3] Thus the key decision for movement leaders to make involves choosing the correct act that dramatizes their alienation and results in some response from the status quo. While it is certainly true that confrontation is necessary in the creation of a movement it is not the only factor involved. As Smith and Windes point out, the organizational structure of a movement does not automatically fall into place after some effort at confronting the status quo takes place.[4]

B. The Organizational Perspective: This perspective is based on the argument that movements are essentially "acts which include mobilizational appeals."[5] Members of a movement join together to respond to a commonly perceived exigency in order to reach the same goal. To make this possible the rhetoric of the collectivity is directed

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recruiting members, delegating responsibilities and explaining setbacks to the membership. This perspective fails to differentiate a movement from any other collective social act. Service organizations and business enterprises utilize some form of mobilization appeals but not all of them would be judged by any segment of society as being a "movement."

The Dramatistic Perspective: According to Griffin a movement begins when a pivotal individual or group experiences alienation from society while at the same time is drawn by a vision of what society can be, enacts a "no." The movement passes from this inception state (with rhetoric designed to create in the "priests of the existing order" a hatred for the movement and to increase in everyone else a rejection of the hierarchy) through a crisis period (a period of mass decision) to a consumation period (a period marked by a ritualistic purging of injustice).[6] While this perspective certainly has much to commend it, its reliance on a linear progression simplifies social life to an extent that we lose sight of the intricate balance between the internal and external dynamics of a movement.

The "Metaphorical" Perspective: According to Michael McGee a movement is an "illusion" created in the "public mind' by a collectivity that wishes to compare social facts to physical motion. The advantage for a collectivity in creating such a social metaphor rests on the fact that movement connotes progress, motion, destiny and the favored status of the underdog. When part of the public bestows the term "movement" on a collectivity it does so because such a metaphor provides a way for the public to bring meaning, order and pattern to human existence.[7] This perspective underscores the active, meaning-making function of human beings who for some reason apply the term "movement" to certain social phenomena and not to others. But McGee is not without his critics. Cathcart notes that McGee does not relate the metaphor "movement" to those features of a social collectivity that exist in time and space, features such as leadership, membership and other organizational dynamics.[8]

"MOVEMENT" AS THE DESIRED ETHOS OF A REFORMING COLLECTIVITY

We have for too long assumed that the term "movement" denotes an organizational entity. A far more useful concept might be to think of "movement" as the ethos that a collectivity desires to create. Whether a collectivity is perceived to be a movement or not depends in part on what the collectivity does to create enough evidence to validate that "movement" is the right term to describe it. When sufficient evidence is presented, each concentric "public" bestow the title of "movment" on the collectivity. This concept acknowledges the active nature of both the sender and the receiver, both the social activist and members of society.

Taking this approach enables the researcher to avoid having to establish a new rhetorical theory for the study of social movements. In one sense the rhetoric involved in a social movement is not unique when compared to the rhetoric any individual speaker uses to create good ethos. What is unique is not the psychological dynamics of ethos construction but the content of the messages that a collectivity offers to warrant the ethos "movement." The content of that rhetoric can be classified under four general headings: (1) the rhetoric of moving towards, (2) the rhetoric of moving from, (3) the rhetoric of moving against, and (4) the rhetoric of moving with.

In order to secure the ethos "movement," a collectivity must show that it is in motion against something. The basic decision within this dimension of ethos creation is, in Cathcart's words, how to establish "a dialectical enjoinment in the moral arena."[9] The collectivity must decide who the enemy will be. The nature of such a "target" can range from something quite concrete and visable (e.g. the board of trustees of the university, all smokers, or judges who are soft on drunk drivers) to the abstract and undefinable (e.g. "the establishment," or "chauvinism"). Part of the psychological dynamics of this process of confrontation involves the estimation by reform leaders and leaders of the status quo of the other party's readiness to risk confrontation compared with their estimation of their own position's vulnerability. What insues is a complex process of perspective taking--a process interpersonal communication scholars would call meta-perspective taking.

The second category of "movement" rhetoric involves attempts to create the image of movement towards something. This rhetoric is ideological in nature. The movement dangles a vision of a novel possibility before society hoping that such a vision will call forth those with similiar visions who will become the movement's "public" and perhaps the movement's members. All collectivities are vulnerable in this dimension of their ethos creation to the cooptation of their vision by the status quo. The status quo may adopt the language of vision in describing the advantages of continuing to act and believe as they do. Or the status quo may make token efforts at implementing the vision while exaggerating their allegiance to the vision.

The third dimension of ethos creation involves the rhetoric of moving from something. It is vital that a movement not only describe what it is moving towards but also analyze what it was that has created the situation they are moving from. This may involve establishing consciousness raising groups to corporately search for ways to articulate why a particular problem developed in society. It may involved publishing autobiographical accounts of those who have given a name to the cause of their pain. This is the rhetoric of catharsis. It is an effort to control a problem by giving it a name and gaining new self worth by "confessing" that one has unknowingly participated in the act of being enslaved.[10] This rhetoric of catharsis may result in concluding that the problem developed because of the sinfulness of humanity, a conspiracy by the wealthy, apathy within the legal system, the natural oppressiveness of a particular race or gender, or the political laxity of a certain segment of society.

The last dimension of ethos creation involves the rhetoric of mobilization. It is an effort to recruit new members while persuading old members that they are "moving with" an ever expanding collection of people in a well-run organization. In Stewart's words, a social movement must eventually "prescribe what must be done, who must accomplish the task and how the task must be accomplished."[11] This dimension includes decisions about how to justify to the membership any setbacks or delays as well as decisions related to maintaining the "viability and visability" of the movement.

APPLICATION OF THE MODEL TO PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN FEMINISM

To create a movement involves the explication of the verb "to move" rhetorically. The founders of a movement consciously or unconsciously explore the dimension of motion that attracts attention, dimensions which bring other individuals from isolated attentiveness to cohesive participation. This explication must involve an attempt to answer explicitly or implicitly the question: "What does it mean to say that *we* (the projected sense of collectiveness by a single writer or speaker) are moving against something, from something, towards something and with others?" When we use this question as the beginning point of our analysis we can more clearly see the genetic structure of a movement and not only describe how the movement has progressed thus far but attempt to anticipate the crisis points it will face in the future because the process of explicating one or more dimensions of the verb "move" have not kept pace with the process in the other dimensions.

THE RHETORIC OF MOVEMENT AGAINST: The rhetoric of movement against is essentially the rhetoric of confrontation. Creators of a movement must decide who the enemy really is and must exert sufficient rhetorical pressure to engage the enemy in a "dialectical enjoinment." The mainstream of Christian feminism has gone through a process of choosing their enemy through a process of elimination.

They have ruled out the historical figure of Jesus through an elaborate process of rhetorical division. Radical feminist like Mary Daly stepped over the line from orthodoxy into heterodoxy when they argued that "the idea of salvation uniquely by a male saviour perpetuates the problem of patriarchial oppression."[12] Those orthodox Christian feminists were left with the problem of reconciling Jesus' life style of "mutuality" (extolling servanthood over domination, acknowledging the personhood of women) with his teachings about the "fatherhood" of God. Mollenkott solves this problem by arguing that Jesus used patriarchial language because he was, as any wise leader must be, rhetorically sensitive, intuitively knowing that "to communicate at all, he had to use language people could comprehend" for "the more startling the concept, the more familiar should be the language in which they are couched."[13]

Other obvious targets escape complete culpability for sexism as well. The Bible is criticized but is not chosen as a target because the liberating experiences of Christian feminists witness to the fact that there is a "canon within the canon" worthy of trust.[14] While some feminists like Daly suggest that men are the problem other feminists like Carmody come to their defense by noting that "men are a reality that is not going to go away, not all men are evil, the evils against women are not the only evils of history, and no philosophy or politics that withdraws from facts such as these deserve a fully serious hearing."[15] While theologians such as Aquinas, Tertullian and Augustine are taken to task for asserting that "woman by nature is defective physically, morally and mentally,"[16] their writings cannot be rewritten, their influence cannot be exorcised and their direct impact on twentieth century church practices is too indistinct to serve as a rallying point.

The enemy chosen by Christian feminism as the most visable and incideous manifestation of sexism in the church is non-inclusive language. The clearest articulation of the rationale for this choice is presented by Mollenkott. Her "rhetorical theory" consists of the following points: "As I imagine, so I think; as I think, so I act; As I act, so I am; As I am, so I perceive."[17] She argues that the images of religion (the public expression in worship of once private theophanies) shape the way we make rational judgments about the way the world is. These thoughts shape the "subcultural communities" that we belong to and influence us because it is in these communities (such as churches) that we learn the "proper" way of acting in the world. These definitions we have of the "proper" role of men and women create the lenses through which we view the events of life. Mollenkott relates this general theory to the particular situation of women by noting:

> Through many centuries, the God-language of worship and liturgy has been a male language: God is the Father, Christ Jesus is the Son, and even the Holy Spirit has been referred to as either "him" or "it". Because of such exclusively male image-making, males have received implicit encouragement to identify themselves with the divine. No matter how sophisticated I may be about the process called anthropomorphism,

> my imagination is going to give me a male picture when I call God as my Father. If I were male, this image or picture would empower me to believe in myself, to be proud of my body, and to have the courage of my convictions. Since I am not male but female, that image or picture exerts subtle pressure on me to give away my power to some other being other than myself, someone who more fully resembles the picture in my imagination, someone male.[18]

Thus Christian feminism has advanced a particular "rhetorical theory" as part of its selection of an "enemy," believing that, in the words of one Christian feminist, "[the language issue] is bringing the feminist agenda to the church's attention most forcefully."[19] Another Christian feminist, Dorothee Solle, calls the push towards inclusive language "relativization," defined as "giving up absolutist symbolizations of God" and believes that it represents "a minimum demand" by women to the church.[20] In even stronger language Carmody voices the exasperation of many Christian feminists, noting that:

> even after some years of women's agitation for equal representation in language, the theological establishment has little sensitivity to the sexism of its ordinary speech. For most male theologians, I suspect, women are still so low on the horizon that theology can push its pen oblivious of their plight. A few men, though, protest that abandoning the generic "man" would sully their limpid style. Introducing "she" now and then in place of the generic "he" somehow sticks in their craw. "Fine," I think we should say, "Stick it in your craw. If you care so little for many women's sensitivities, you deserve to sputter and choke.[21]

Following Mary Daly's advice to involve themselves in "a castrating of language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world"[22]by choosing "a new set of meanings that clashes with the old,"feminists have chosen to create their "dialectical enjoinment in the moral arena"through their choice of language.One writer choses to use the pronoun "she" when refering to the HolySpirit

Some have replaced the word "father" in the Lord's Prayer with "abba" and "mankind" with "humankind" in certain hymns. Others prefer to use metaphors representative of female experience in describing religious experience. Morton, for example, refers to "the uterine of baptism that might begin to heal the split between physical birth and spiritual birth, since both are ejections out of the Great Womb."[23] Others have opted either for inclusive but awkward phrasing ("God gave God-self") or "kenning-like epithets" for God such as "Sea-walker," "Light-bringer," "Sin-forgiver," "Star-kindler," "Whirlwind-speaker," or "Life-restorer."[24]

In addition to this attempt to jarr images, Christian feminists have raised the saliency of the non-inclusive language issue by "monitoring" the language used in denominational meetings and reporting a summary of their findings in Christian feminist publications. The publication The Flyer, a newsletter of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the United Methodist Church, regularly publishes summaries of "informal and formal monitoringæ of annual conference sessions by their readers. One group of "language monitors" from the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church came to their church's annual meeting armed with nine-inch squares of red cloth to wave when non-inclusive language was used.[25]

THE RHETORIC OF MOVEMENT TOWARDS: The rhetoric of "movement towards" is a rhetoric of vision, a rhetoric of either a paradise waiting to be regained or a heaven yet to be reached. It is a rhetoric studiously vague enough to incorporate the dreams of each potential member but distinct enough to appear to be achievable. As one Christian feminist has stated: "every liberation movement rises out of its bondage with a new speech on its lips."[26] The choice Christian feminism continues to face is how revolutionary to make the vision, how unique should the words be that they speak.

Some leaders in the movement suggest that the vision should be easily identifiable and realistically achieveable. It should be a vision germane to the world we now live in; it should be a vision of a kingdom of balanced power. Mollenkott argues that the goal should be to force male leaders to share decision-making with women at all

levels of power in proportion to the number of women in the pews.[27] But others argue that any quest for power--even if the original intentions are pure--participates in the same spirit of domination that empowers sexism. Carmody warns feminists of the potential for being "seduced by visions of the Lockean good life" resulting in aims "no higher than access to establishmentarian power."[28] The closest anyone comes to spelling out what an alternative vision would be like is Rosemary Radford Ruether.

Ruether calls for a state of being she calls "androgyny," a reconstruction of relationships "which can give each person the fullness of their being stolen from them by false polarization." This can be accomplished, she argues, by uniting "the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movment to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of this society." She calls for a "democratic socialism" that is concomitantly a "communitarian socialism." This would involve residential grops that would pool their financial resources and talents to share domestic tasks, child-raising responsibilities and gardening with "those who chose to be managers of these functions. . .suitably rewarded" regardless of their gender.[29]

She argues that such a process of communalization would "drastically reduce the present pattern of consumption, waste, and duplication of equipment in nuclear families," would prompt manufacturers to no longer make shoddy goods, would give children access to a variety of adults with emotional and intellectual resources their own parents might lack, and would prevent "the present sense of alienation and powerlessness of the atomized individual" since each commune would make most of the decisions that affected their immediate lives.[30]

Ruether does not hide her frustration that others have not attempted to expand their vision. She writes: "Women can't decide whether they want to 'get into the man's world,' defined as an evil world, but also the 'real world,' or hold out for a better but non-existent world represented by the still unempowered 'feminine' principles."[31]

THE RHETORIC OF MOVEMENT FROM: The rhetoric of this dimension of ethos is the rhetoric of consciousness raising, the rhetoric of collective catharsis, the rhetoric of worship. It is the rhetoric of worship because where Christian feminists gather,they worship; it is the rhetoric of consciousness raising and collective catharsis because worship contains the prophetic word that describes and decries injustice and the priestly word that points toward new life and healing.

Secular feminists playwrights and liturgical scholars use a similiar vocabulary in describing the dynamics involved in their respective disciplines. Batya Podos, a feminist director, calls her blending of goddess mythology and feminist consciousness raising"ritual theatre," whose goal is the "emotional purge that leads to self-revelation and transformation" through the interweaving of the past and present in "non-linear language," that is, chant-like repetitions of names that drift "in and out of consciousness. . . .omnipresent, like the sea," and the creation of symbols that "sustain images of female power."[32] James White describes worship as an effort to blurr time through repetition, the "constant rehearsal of past events [and] God's present activity," the constanat recital [of] events that become my events and a part of my life, events that transform my being."[33]

Christian feminism uses the elements of worship and secular theatre to create the shared experience of "moving away" from past enslavement through the rhetoric of catharsis. Such rhetoric involves the identificaiton of comon pain, an explanation of why things became so bad, the confession of direct or indirect complicity and the extolling of symbols of new life. While there are, of course, examples of non-liturgical consciousness raising experiences in Christian feminism, descriptions of cathartic experiences among the membership fo the movement are more likely to be described in the context of a worship experience than in any other context.

Worship experiences are cathartic for Christian feminist for a number of reasons. Because women are in the majority at these worship experiences they sense in a more dramatic way their power as a reforming presence in the church. They experience--many for the first time--worship led by women and communion served by ordained women. They can hear inclusive language used without the fear of

how that will be perceived by men. They are exposed to articulate statements of the pain of exclusion. At one conference women heard Nancy Hardesty confess that ". . .the weariness of translating the language to somehow force my own inclusion, I think, [is] part of the reason why I've always had trouble feeling that God really loved me."[34] Worshippers are encouraged to respond to opportunities for emotional cleansing through the expression of pain, anger and penitence--penitence in the sense of emotional complicity in the act of enslavement.

During one worship service participants were given a chance to write their feelings about sexism in the church on notecards; the cards were then shuffled, distributed and read as a litany during the worship service. In other worship services women in the congregation have responded to the opportunity to express their pain by recounting the pains of being a clergywoman, the pain of being a single woman and therefore assumed by many to be a lesbian, the pain of being gay and therefore unordainable in most United Methodist Conferences, the pain of being torn between the responsibilities of raising children and of being an active member of the Christian feminist movement.[35]

During such worship experiences women have the opportunity to externalize their pain and thereby distance themselves from it by ritualistically "killing" it in the telling of it. There is a corporate anger that can be generated when these experiences are shared that cancels the self-directed anger that makes a woman an accomplice in her own enslavement. Putting a corporate name on the experiences of each one and re-directing the anger in a healthy direction enables women to know what they are moving from and to experience a distancing from life as it has been lived.

THE RHETORIC OF MOVEMENT WITH: The rhetoric of this dimension of movement ethos is the rhetoric of mobilization, the rhetoric of organizing and delegating, the rhetoric of maintaining visability and viability. Christian feminism continues to survive as a viable movmeent within Protestantism because of a simple, yet effective, mobilization plan. This plan appears to have the following rhetorical strategy behind it: (1) use existing denominational structures as the forum for attacking sexism in the church where possible,

(2) encourage the creation of multiple organizations, each of which appeal to the unique needs of a segment of Christian women (as opposed to a central monolithic organization), (3) rely on the two-step flow of persuasion by encouraging women in leadership positions to attend national and regional meetings, (4) compile resources that movement members can use as alternatives to the sexist literature in churches, and (5) distribute a listing of professional openings within middle-management in denominational structures.

Such a strategy has been successful. Working through the Women's Division of the Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church, Christian feminist have successfully pressured that denomination to create a study commission on the participation of women in the program and policy-making structures of the denomination. Similiar efforts in the United Presbyterian Church have led to the creation of a Council on Women and the Church.

The second strategy, which involves the nurturing of multiple organizations, has also been successful. A quick survey of Christian feminist publications resulted in the following list of national organizations: The Feminist Theological Institute, Women in Spiritual Education, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, Women of Faith Task Force, the Evangelical Women's Caucus, the National Consultation of Ordained women, the NCC Council on Women in Ministry, Church Women United, Women's Theological Center, National Association of Religious Women, Feminist Theological Coalition of Chicago, Interagency Women's Staff Group, International Association of Women Ministers, Campus Ministry Women, United Methodist Clergywoman Consultation, Center for Women and Religion, Center for Christian Feminist Ministries, Black Women in Church and Society, the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South, and the Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University.

Each of these organizations is kept informed of each other's activities through a network of newsletters and through coverage by the religious press. Each organization draws from a common pool of Christian feminist theologians: Rosemary Radford Ruether, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Denise Carmody, etc. Each organization can pressure for inclusive language and equal representation by women in the power structures of the church in different ways and from different directions.

The third mobilization strategy that Christian feminism uses involves attracting female opinion leaders to short-term learning experiences, relying upon them to return home and share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others. A survey of one Christian feminist publication over the span of seven months produced the following information. There were forty-nine different forums, workshops, conferences, retreats, and assemblies offered in sixteen different states with the greatest number of opportunities for Christian feminists offered in the states of California, Ohio, New York, Illinois, Washington D.C., and New Hampshire. they covered twenty-five different topics ranging from "the politics of liturgy" to "Mary and the feminine in Christianity." The greates number of themes related to women in the ministry (11) with the rest covering such topics as "sexuality/spirituality: healing the split," "Pornography, Violence and Christian Values," "Building Women-Church: A Hope for the Future," "Women, Their Experience and the Image of God," "Feminists at Prayer: a Jewish-Christian Exchange" and "Women of Faith: Same Journey, Different Paths."

The same random selection of issues of The Flyer produced evidence that Christian feminists have assembled a numberically impressive array of alternate hymnals, liturgies, church school materials, study booklets, video-tapes, cassettes, posters and historical studies. They covered a range of subjects including spirituality (5), biblical studies (4), feminist history (4), feminist ethics(4), inclusive language liturgies (5), inclusive language hymnals (9), Christian feminist recording groups (6), and resources for women in the ministry (2). These offerings included a 36 volume set entitled Women in American Protestant Religion: 1800-1936, a newsletter for women and men whose spources are clergy entitled Spice, a 132 page study guide for teaching "Women of the Bible" to elementary and middle school children, a study for adult groups related to language, God and humanity, a poster of the sculpture "Christa" and "herstory cards," with "biographical/herstory captions with space for a message."[36]

The "talent scout" section of The Flyer also included listings of administrative, academic, academic-administrative and ministerial positions available. These opportunities for employment broke down into sixty-three administrative positions, fifteen seminary positions, six academic-administrative positions and four positions available for ordained ministers.

This is the mobilization rhetoric that is neither exciting to compose nor particularly exciting to study. And yet it is a part of a rhetorical strategy designed to insure that Christian feminist are highly motivated, extensively prepared to offer alternative resources to their churches and securely entrenched in the decision making positons that will shape the future of Protestantism.

AN EVALUATION OF MOVEMENT ETHOS: In order for a collectivity to create the ethos of movement, all dimensions of that ethos must be develped enough to support each other. A crisis in one aspect endangers every other part and eventually the whole. So far Christian feminism has managed to create an effective but not a flawless ethos.

Its confrontational rhetoric, focused on non-inclusive language and anti-feminist theology, has gained the attention of the status quo and has achieved some major successes. The development of the Inclusive Language Lectionary is the most noticeable example of the success of the movement along this dimension. But in evaluating the decisions made by Christian feminist we must ask two questions: (1) Has this strategy resulted in sufficient "dialectical enjoinment" fron the status quo? and (2) Will this dialectical enjoinment lead to significant changes with the decison making bodies of Protestantism?

Even a cursory glance at the opinion section of any mainline Protestant denominational paper will confirm that the confrontational strategy of attacking language has brought the feminist agenda to the attention of the grassroots membership. Some view the confrontation as "a profound opportunity to unchain our God,"[37] "a healthy awareness of the importance of words in shaping the vision of human life that Christians are called to live,"[38] and a productive way to "lure back and excite women who are not in the church now because it is too sexist."[39]

Others view the confrontation as "a stronger, more thorough, more enduring tyranny than either that of Nazism or Communism,"[40] "a new fundamentalism,"[41] and an effort "to neuter our God and our Saviour."[42] Others call it a "rejection of the truth of Jesus and a perverted vision of the freedom God offers us."[43]

The major advantage of language as a target for reform is that it deals with something common to all church members and not something either easily ignored or unimportant. Indeed those who call the goal of inclusive language "trite" and "inconsequential" often do so in language so strident that the tone betrays the content of their message. To be confronted about the words we use to express the experiences we have makes us very self-conscious. Such confrontation causes us to be more introspective about the dynamic interplay among symbols, personal experience, doctrinal purity and social responsibility. Such a confrontation has the potential to surface deeper theolgical issues which is the goal of Christian feminism.

But this strategy is not without its disadvantages. Any movement has a finite amount of confrontational energy and the question continually haunting any movement is where to place the emphasis--on short term changes or long term changes. While it is true that the twentieth century has witnessed dramatic changes in the role women play in denominational structures, equality in representation, opportunities and salaries has not been reached. At the present time there does not seem to be sufficient concern for these issues across Protestantism to insure that women have clear legislative policy to base any protest on nor sufficient organizational support to insure that their complaints will be acted upon quickly. The decision to focus on long term changes in language and theology is not without a price tag. Short term issues of equality in representation and salary appear to lack vigorous support.

In addition, efforts to stringently avoid masculine pronouns have produced awkward and bizarre translations. One of the most familiar of all New Testament passages--"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,"--is translated: "For God so lovedthe world that God gave God's only Child." Masculine pronouns have been avoided even when they appear to be genetically appropriate. For example, the passage "Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Philippians 3:20-21) is translated "Jesus Christ,

who will change our lowly body to be like Christ's glorious body, by the power which enables Christ even to subject all things to Christ's self." In a similar manner, the verse "Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds" becomes "Jesus Christ, who gave self for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Christ's self a chosen people who are zealous for good deeds."[44] Thus it may be that people who originally embrace in principle the value of inclusive language may be aesthetically repulsed by the awkward and limp prose that has thus far been produced. Whether the practical manifestation of inclusive language will capture the allegiance of grassroot Christians remains to be seen.

There are also rhetorical problems arising from efforts to create a vision of what the church and society will be like if the movement is successful. The first problem, already noted, is that no coherent vision has thus far surfaced. The second problem is that those visions so far offered are in danger of raising expectations so high that even partial success will appear to be abject failure. While it is conceivalbe that Christian feminism may change the metaphorical expression of Christianity, it is doubtful that "a new heaven and a new earth" will result from their efforts alone. While some Christian feminsts are attempting to link their efforts with liberation movements in South America, civil rights and gay liberation efforts in this country and feminism in other countries of the world, at the present time these "links" are more individual visions than a shared vision of a movement. A vision has an inherent danger of outpacing the strength and stamina of the human visionaries. If Christian feminist believe that upon their shoulders alone rests the salvation of society, their own visionary rhetoric may paralyze them. Inspite of this danger, the visonary rhetoric continues. One feminist theologian states that the movement "will not and cannot stop short of the ultimate revolutionizing of life on earth, not the least by-product of which might be the prevention of genocide and biocide through thermonuclear war."[45]

The last rhetorical problem has to do with rhetorical vulnerability and devil terms--words which, according to Richard Weaver, are

"prime repellants."[46] Words like "Marxism" and "socialism" still raise the specter of totalitarian regimes and personal enslavement in the minds of many Christians. Recent controversies over "Liberation Theology" have been caused by those who cannot imagine anything good coming out of Karl Marx. If Christian feminism wishes to decrease its vulnerability to demagoguery from Christian conservatives and Fundamentalists, they must avoid those "prime repellants" that can short-circuit the thinking processes of their target audiences. Perhaps the more liberal faction of Christian feminism needs to listen to those evangelical Christian feminists who caution the movement that "the more subversive our ideas are, the more moderate should be our language in expresssing them."[47]

Efforts to move from sexism through consciousness raising also produces a problem when such a process involves the use of the term "godddess" as part of the liturgical act. There are Christian feminsts who believe that such a symbol is necessary. Carmody, basing much of her argument on the writngs of Carol Christ, argues that the Goddess symbol has numerous advantages: (1) it legitimizes the powerfulness of women "by linking women to a female sacral power, the new Goddess-devotee [affirms herself], saying that what makes God God is as much in her as men," (2) it boosts women's self-esteem by exalting "female creativity and cyclicism," enabling women to feel better about their bodies, (3) it affirms through the acts of worship the goodness of female strength, independence and assertiveness, and (4) it provides a common symbol that may nurture female bonding. Carmody takes a very utilitarian approach to this issue noting that "more important than the question of the Goddess' objective reality, then is her symbolic function."[48]

But opposition to the use of such a symbol is mounting within Christian feminism. The most formidable opponent is one of the most respected leaders in Christian feminism, Rosemary Radford Ruether. Ruether criticizes those who warrant the use of the symbol of the Goddess by arguing that its presence in primitive cultures "proves" that they were matriarchal for their "tendentious use of historical material." She goes on to argue that the use of the Goddess may have just the opposite effect than that intended. She writes:

> To take over the goddess-king mythical pattern uncritically, and to misinterpret the goddess as a divine identity for women, may have an effect that is far from liberating or egalitarian. To do so may actually allow women to play the role of imperial dominance and vengefully and contemptuously to seek to reduce the status of male to that of dependent children, sexual toys or alien devils--in short to do unto males very much what feminists have accused males of doing to women in patriarchal religion. . . .Revenge may be sweet but can it be the mark of truly feminist spirituality or ethics?

Finally, Christian feminism faces three rhetorical problems in creating a credible rhetoric of mobilization in order to establish the ethos of "movement with." The first rhetorical problem involves normalizing relationships between the secular feminist movement and the Christian feminist movement. Parvey is certainly right in her conclusion that there is very little dialogue between those who have left the church and those who have stayed.[49] Christian feminist have attempted to begin to bridge the gap from their side by arguing that "to be a genuine feminist is very much like being a genuine Christian"[50] or by noting that it is ironic that the Christian model of "mutuality and servanthood" have been brought "to the attention of the world in the twentieth century" by the Women's Movement.[51]

Both of these authors are trying to bridge the gap between secular feminism and Christianity by locating the major point of identification in social action not creedal affirmation. Essentially their argument is enthymetic in the sense that they are hoping each side will fill in the unspoken premise from their own experiences. They are hoping that Christians will add to the argument "Jesus came to proclaim mutuality in a world alligned with the dominant/submissive value system" the unspoken warrant: "if you allign yourself with Jesus (i.e. if you are a Christian) you will support mutuality, which is the heart of femism." They are hoping that secular feminist will bring to the argument "Jesus came to proclaim mutuality in a world alligned with the dominant/submissive value system" the unspoken warrant: "if you allign youself with mutuality (i.e. if you are a feminist) you will not

attack an early prophet of mutuality, that is, Jesus. Using Jesus as the focal point for identification is certainly a better rhetorical strategy for mutuality than trying to locate any point of identification within the actions of organized religion since both secular feminist and Christian feminist agree that institutional religion is severly flawed by sexism.

The second rhetorical problem involves the relationship of Christian feminism to organized religion. While there certainly is a need to create the ethos of confrontation, such a need must be balanced with the need to create the ethos that makes mobilization possible. How can a reformer stay within an institutional setting and maintain the doctrinal credentials and spiritual ethos necessary to gain the respect of others while also appearing to stand outside the institution. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, the need is to be "in the church but not fully of the church."

So far Christian feminist have managed to walk the narrow line between reform and separatism by balancing calls for feminist base communities with rhetorical strategies that appear to affirm their ties with institutional religion. It is certainly too early to tell with any precision whether this movement will be able to continue such a rhetorical balancing act and there is little precedence in church history to guide us in predicting what might happen. It is certainly true that reforming movements within single denominations who have established para-ecclesiastical groupings--the Wesleyan movment, the Holiness movement, the Charismatic movement--have given in to the temptation of separation. It is also true that reforming movements that cross denominational boundaries--the Social Gospel Movement, the Christian Psychology Movement, Fundamentalism and Modernism--and have survived, have not established para-ecclesisastical grouping. The danger lies in the tendency for the confrontational dimension of reform to extract a greater emotional toll from reformers than the visonary-consciousness raising dimension can add in any suplimentary capacity.

The last rhetorical problem that has arisen within the mobilization dimension for Christian feminists has been their inability to build supportive relationships with non-white, non-American feminists.

Hoover notes that the agenda for Christian feminism--"challenging the theological view of women, challenging the religious laws and/or customs which bar women from ordination and demnading that the professional status and salaries of women in the church be upgraded"--does not motivate Black women because they are not excluded by ecclesiastical law from ordination, there are very few staff positions that are salaried in the black church for there to be any disparity between male and female staff people, and the economic probmems within the black church are so great few women have the luxury of thinking about theological issues. [52]

Ruether also decries the inability of feminist in general and Christian feminist in particular to understand how sexism participates in the spirit of domination with racism--in her words, "the interstructuring of sexism with all other kinds of oppression."[53] She calls upon feminists to go beyond a "monolithic analysis" of the conditions of women and realize that minority women need the support of other women in their task of integrating their struggle as women with their participation in the struggle of their racial and socioeconomic group. Until white Christian feminists succeed in realizing that in some aspects of life they belong to "the ruling class," the Christian feminist movement may lend itself to the consolidation of the power of the ruling class against the poor and nonwhites of both gender.

CONCLUSION: In order for a collectivity to create the ethos of movement, all dimensions of that ethos must be developed enough to support one another. So far Christian feminism has managed to create an effective but not flawless ethos. Its confrontational rhetoric, focused on non-inclusive language and anti-feminist theology, has gained the attention of the status quo and has achieved some major successes. Its consciousness raising rhetoric, designed to initiate new members and rededicate veteran members to the cause, has been successful because it has been skillfully integrated into worship. Its mobilization rhetoric--designed to increase its membership, train its leadership, and publicize its presence--has been effective but not without coming dangerously close to appearing like it favors separatism. The weakest dimension of its ethos involves its visionary rhetoric. While such rhetoric is intended to be lofty and invigorating it often appears to be grandiose and paralyzing. Whether this movement

can maintain the successful dimensions of their ethos while improving their visionary rhetoric remains to be seen. Such a difficult balancing act does not occur in a vacuum; each collectivity is confronted by forces with the potential to destroy its ethos in all of the dimensions discussed above. But a discussion of the rhetoric of the counter-movement must await another convention.

NOTES

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[23]Nelle Morton, "Preaching the Word," in Sexist Religion and Women in the Church, ed. Alice L. Hageman (New York: Association Press, 1974), p. 35.

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